

CONAN THE BARBARIAN

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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CONAN

THE BARBARIAN™



barry smith

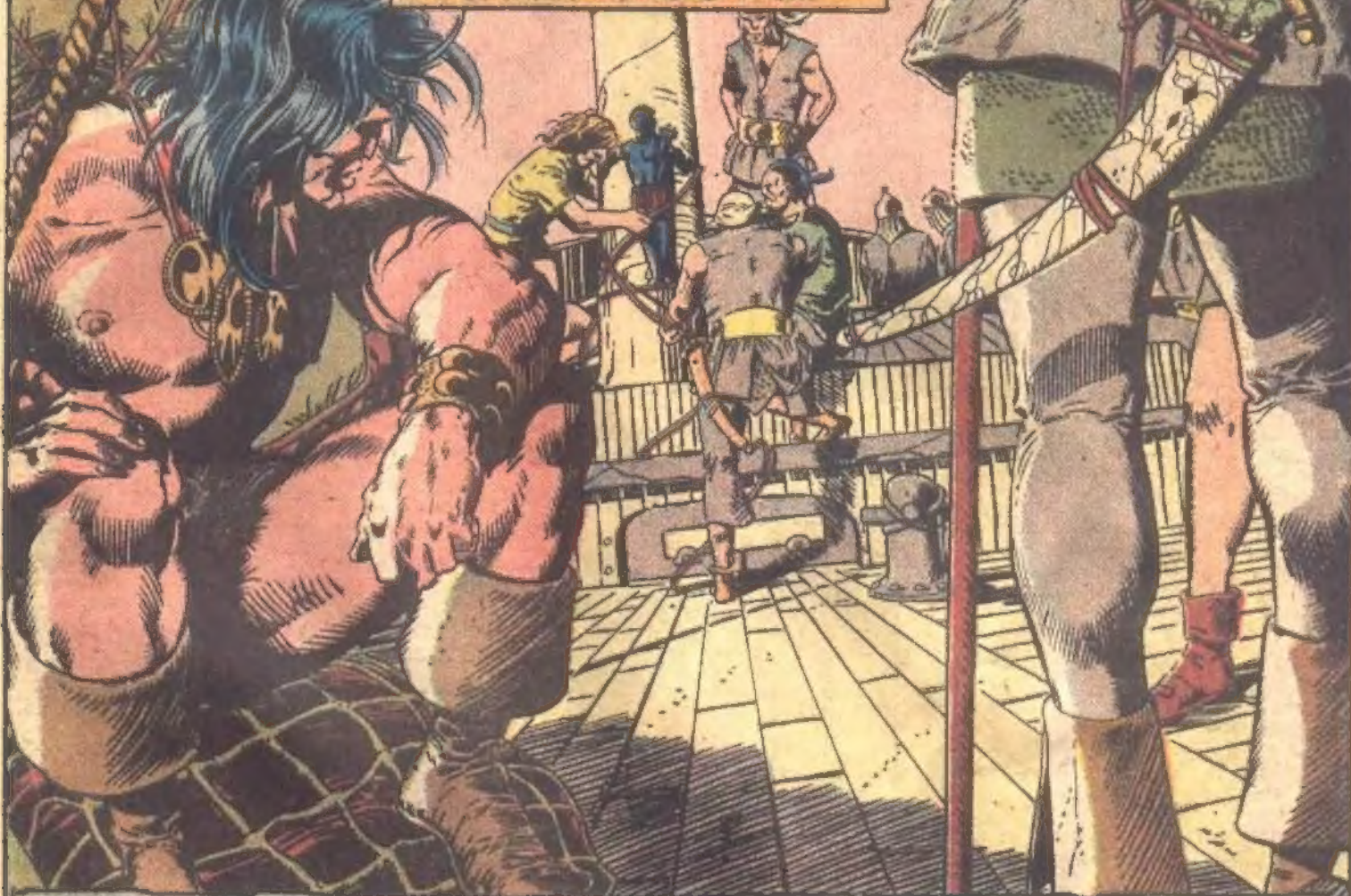
SWORD & SORCERY IN A **TIMELESS TIME!**

CONAN THE BARBARIAN™

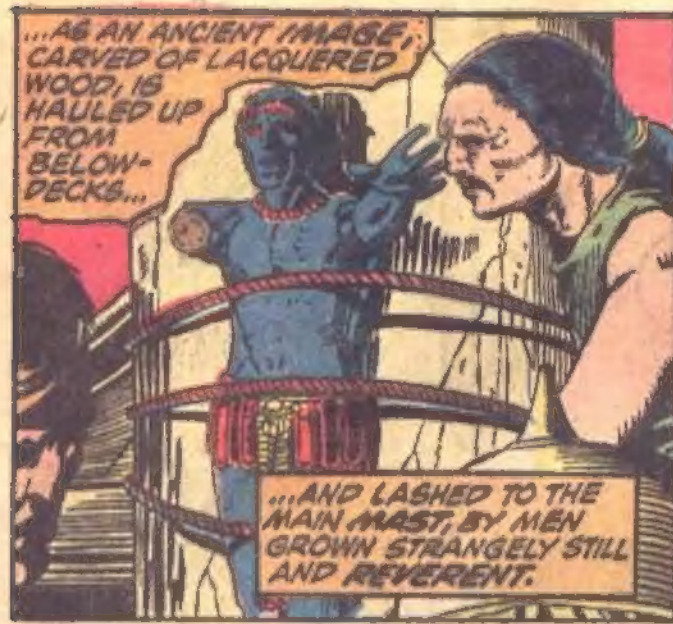
HAWKS FROM THE SEA!

THE VILAYET SEA: SOME MEN SAY IT IS REALLY BUT A TURANIAN LAKE, FOR GREAT PURPLE-SAILED WAR-GALLEYS PROWL ITS WATERY VASTNESS NIGHT AND DAY, PROTECTING THE RICH SEA-TRADE WHICH FILLS THE COFFERS OF TURAN'S KING YILDIZ...

BUT THIS DAY, AS THE SUN DIES BRIGHTLY ALONG THE FAR HORIZON, THE PATROLING IS FORGOTTEN... AND A SULLEN, BLACK-MANED BARBARIAN WONDERS WHY...



Stan Lee * Roy Thomas and Barry Smith * DAN ADKINS, * CONTINUING THE ADVENTURES
PRESENTS! WRITER/EDITOR ARTIST. EMBELLISHER OF THE HERO CREATED BY
JOHN COSTANZA, * Robert E. Howard
LETTERER



...AS AN ANCIENT IMAGE, CARVED OF LACQUERED WOOD, IS HAULED UP FROM BELOW-DECKS...

...AND LASHED TO THE MAIN MAST, BY MEN GROWN STRANGELY STILL AND REVERENT.



AH, OUTLANDER... I SEE YOU ARE IGNORANT OF THE TRUE KEEPER OF THE WAY...

...OF TARIM, THE MAN WHO BECAME A GOD...

...AND WHOSE GRAVEN IMAGE STILL INSPIRES ALL OF HYRKANIAN DESCENT.

HE DOESN'T DO MUCH FOR ME, SOLDIER.



TARIM INSPIRES ALL, BARBARIAN.

IT IS HIS HOLY WAR WE NOW GO TO FIGHT..

--WE, AND YOU WITH US!



THEN MAYBE I WON'T FIGHT, AFTER ALL.

WHY RISK MY LIFE FOR A PIECE OF PAINTED WOOD?



YOU SHALL RISK YOUR LIFE FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF TARIM, MY FRIEND...



...WHILE YOU'VE STILL A LIFE TO LOSE!

CROM!



HARD TO SEE WITH BLOOD IN YOUR EYES, EH, SAVAGE?

WELL, NO NEED TO SEE. JUST KNEEL, AND BEG FORGIVENESS OF TARIM FOR--



FOR NOTHING, YOU CAT-EYED FOOL!

IT'S YOU WHO SHOULD RATHER BEG FORGIVENESS OF ME--



--IF IT WEREN'T ALREADY TOO LATE FOR THAT!





THERE!
LET THAT
FINNED DEVIL
HAVE THOSE
ARROWS
FOR HIS
SUPPER!

OH
YES--
AND TOSS
A LINE TO
BALHAZ,
WHILE
YOU'RE
AT IT.



NOW, FAFNIR...WHAT
WAS YOUR BEARDESS
FRIEND'S NAME,
AGAIN?

WHY,
IT'S--

I AM
CONAN.

I'M A
CIMMERIAN...
AND I CAN
TALK.



THEN YOU'D BE WELL
ADVISED TO DO SO
RESPECTFULLY,
SWORD-BROTHER...

FOR YOU KNOW WELL
THAT THIS IS YEZDIGERD,
PRINCE OF ALL TURAN...

AND I MUST ASK
YOU NOT TO DEplete
THE RANKS OF MY
SOLDIERY WITH PER-
SONAL QUARRELS.

IT'S
YOUR
SHIP.

YOU'LL DO
WELL TO
REMEMBER
THAT, MAN...



FOR THERE ARE
MORE SHARKS
IN THESE WATERS
THAN ONE ONLY!



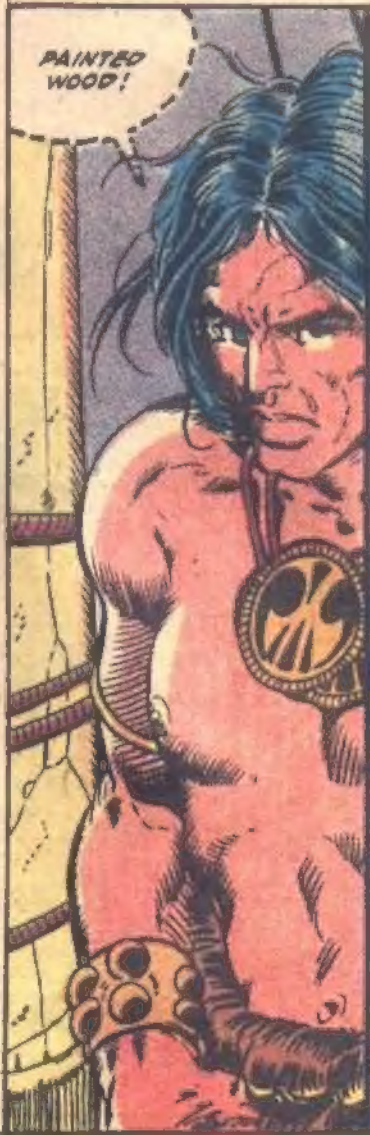
NOW, IF YOU'LL PLEASE
COME WITH ME...

I WOULD HAVE
WORDS
WITH
OUR GREAT
BRONZED
GUESTS FROM
OUT OF THE
MYSTERY-
SHROUDED
NORTH.

ARE YOU
COMING,
CONAN?



YES...
I'M
COMING...



PAINTED
WOOD!



BALHAZ--THAT
MAN SHAMED
YOU, IN FRONT OF
OUR PRINCE.
SHALL I--?

STAY YOUR
SHAFT, ARCHER!
I'LL WAIT
MY CHANCE...



AND
IT WILL
SURELY
COME!



I'LL NOT MINCE WORDS, NORTHLANDERS. WE ARE **EASTWARD** BOUND, TO FIGHT A GREAT AND HOLY WAR...

AND, THOUGH MY WAR-FLEET SHOULD REJOIN US BY THE MORROW, I CAN STILL USE EVERY **FIGHTING-MAN** I CAN FIND.



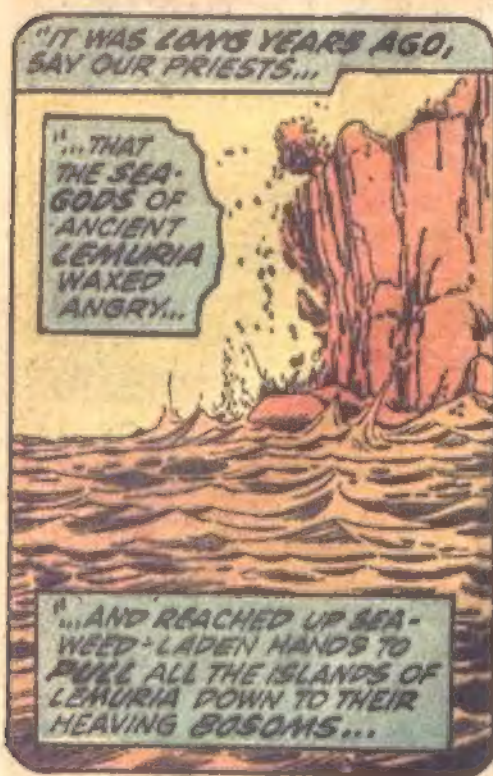
WILL YOU TWO **EMBRACE** OUR CAUSE?

AS **CASTAWAYS** YOU'VE HAILED ABOARD, WE'VE LITTLE CHOICE, PRINCE.

BUT--COULDN'T YOU TELL US **WHO** YOU'RE FIGHTING--AND **WHY**?



OH, YES--THE **DETAILS**. QUITE **SIMPLE**, REALLY...



"IT WAS **LONG** YEARS AGO, SAY OUR PRIESTS..."

"...THAT THE **SEA-GODS** OF ANCIENT **LEMURIA** WAXED ANGRY..."

"...AND REACHED UP **SEA-WEED**-LADEN HANDS TO **PULL** ALL THE ISLANDS OF **LEMURIA** DOWN TO THEIR HEAVING **BOSOMS**..."



"A **LEADER** ROSE UP AMID THE **CATAclysm**--THE MAN CALLED **TARIM**--!"

"HE **STILLED** HIS **TRIBESMEN'S** **PANIC**, AND **DIRECTED** THEM TO **FLEE**--"



--INTO THE **VERY SEA** THEY FEARED!



"HE WAS A **MYSTIC**--A **SEER**, WHO **HEELED** THE **SICK** AND THE **LAME**--"

"...AND WHO **UNERRINGLY** LED HIS PEOPLE **WESTWARD** ACROSS THE **SEA**..."

"**WESTWARD**--TOWARD THE **SETTING SUN**..."



"...TILL THEY SETTLED ON WHAT IS NOW THE **EASTERN SHORE** OF THE **VILAYET**, AND BECAME KNOWN AS... **HYRKANIAN**S."

"**LATER STILL**, SOME OF MY **NEARER** **ANCESTORS** **CROSSED** EVEN THAT **INLAND SEA**..."

"...AND **FOUNDED** **ASHRAPUR**, **CAPITAL** OF THE **KINGDOM** NOW CALLED... **TURAN**!"



"**BUT**, THERE IS NO **HYRKANIAN**, ON **EITHER** SIDE OF THE **VILAYET**, WHO **PAYS** NOT **HOMAGE** TO **TARIM**!"

"HE **LIVES** ON, **CENTURY** AFTER **CENTURY**, IN THE **PERSON** OF HIS **DESCENDENTS**..."

"...**EACH** OF WHOM IS **DECLARED** TO BE **TARIM** **INCARNATE**!"

"THAT KINGDOM WHERE THE TARIM RESIDES HAS CLAIM TO BEING FOREMOST AMONG ALL HYRKANIAN LANDS!"

"...UNTIL A FEW SHORT WEEKS AGO!"

"AND, THE TARIM HAS LONG DWELT WITHIN THE GRIFFIN-GUARDED WALLS OF AGHRAPUR..."

"THEN IT WAS THAT PAID EMISSARIES OF THE CITY-STATE MAKKALET STOLE INTO THE TEMPLE BY NIGHT-- AND ABDUCTED THE LIVING TARIM!"

"FOR THIS OUTRAGE, MY FATHER KING YILDIZ HAS DECREED THAT MAKKALET MUST DEARLY PAY!"

"IT IS TO BE RAZED TO THE GROUND--"

"--ALL WITHIN IT, PUT TO THE SWORD AND THE TORCH--"

"--AND THE TARIM RESTORED TO HIS RIGHTFUL TEMPLE!"

NOR WOULD WISE YILDIZ TRUST ANY TO LEAD THE HOSTS AGAINST MAKKALET SAVE HIS OWN SON AND HEIR--

I, VEZDIGERD-- WHO ONE DAY SHALL SPREAD THE BORDERS OF TURAN FURTHER THAN MY SIRE'S WILDEST DREAMS!

REST ASSURED-- THE TARIM SHALL BE RESCUED!

WHY DOES HE NEED RESCUING-- IF HE'S THE INCARNATION OF A GOD?

WHAT NEED HAVE GODS OF TURANIAN SEA-HAWKS?

WHY, CONAN... YOU FORGET THAT MAKKALET IS ALSO THE CHIEF TRADING RIVAL OF AGHRAPUR.

TO RESCUE A GOD, AND LAY LOW A RIVAL-- ALL IN ONE FELL SWOOP--

WHAT COULD BE MORE HOLY THAN THAT?

WHY YOU INSOLENT SON OF AN HYBORIAN--!

YOU DARE SPEAK THUS TO THE ONCE AND FUTURE EMPEROR OF TURAN!?

BY THE CRIMSON HEART OF ERLIK, I'LL--

WHY MITRA!

SHEATHE YOUR BLADE, PRINCE! THE VARNIRMAN MEANT NO OFFENSE.

BESIDES, DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU NEED MEN FOR YOUR HEAVEN-ORDAINED WAR?

--LIVING MEN?

TRUE ENOUGH. YOU'LL DO ME NO GOOD RESTING IN SOME SHARK'S BELLY.

THEN YOU'LL AID OUR CAUSE-- OF YOUR OWN FREE WILL?

I'D KNOW ONE DETAIL, ONLY...

PULSATING PRONOUNCEMENTS AND PERTINENT PROPAGANDA FROM THE PUNDITS WHO PLAY FOR FUN!

ITEM! No STAN LEE'S SOAPBOX this month, pilgrim! Turns out ol' Smiley feels he just about talked himself out last time around, with an awesome epistle which took up the length and breadth of the whole Bullpen page! Instead, our peerless new Publisher and erstwhile Editorial Director would prefer that we clue you in about some of the nifty new artists, writers, and phantasmagorical features we've got lined up for you this month and in the sun-splashed days to come! Ready? Then away we go. . .

ITEM! Biggest bombshell of all is the first fantastic issue of a comic-mag called **DOC SAVAGE, THE MAN OF BRONZE**! Unless you've been hiding in the wilds of Borneo, you recognize that name instantly as belonging to the old-time pulp-magazine hero who's been more popular than ever these past few years, as the super-star of a series of Bantam paperbacks—more than sixty to date, and still going strong. And now, mighty Marvel will be chronicling some of his greatest adventures in comic form! Doc's first ish was scripted by our spanking-new Editor **ROY THOMAS**, and drawn by the wildly-acclaimed team of **ROSS (Boss) ANDRU** and **Long JOHN SEVERIN**—and we've got a hunch that this is gonna be one of the biggies, right up there with rapturously-received newcomers like **HERO FOR HIRE**, **DRACULA**, **WEREWOLF BY NIGHT**, and **WAR-LOCK**! So get in on the ground floor with **DOC SAVAGE**, hear — and no getting off till we reach the 86th floor! (And, an artful aside to forestall about a zillion letters — yep, we've got **THE SHADOW** lined up for the weeks to come, also — so put away that crystal ball and start saving up your shekels, perspicacious one!)

ITEM! We've got some other fabulous firsts lined up for you this time, as well — but we'll let you read about them in the Checklist section! Meanwhile, just to prove we really mean it when we say that Marvel is on the move again, we've been busy digging up some talented new artists and writers to boggle your mind! Want a ferinstance or three? Well, try Far-Out **FRANK BRUNNER**, who teamed up with (ahem!) oldtimer **BARRY SMITH** on a recent Dr. Strange mini-saga, and who's slated for other things to boot!

Then of course there's Roisterous **RALPH REESE**, who helped us launch our new **JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY** mag, now on sale; the irreverent **BILLY GRAHAM**, who's polishing the pencils on the latest Luke Cage landmark; Mad-cap **MIKE TRIMPE**, who's been helping brother **HERBIE** splash India ink on the latest Ant-Man extravaganzas — and this doesn't even count "Duke" **WAYNE BORING**, one of comicdom's potent pioneers, whose recent Captain Marvel return marks his first (but hopefully not his last) outing for the House of Ideas! Nope, we're not putting the **ROMITAS** and the **BUSCEMAS** and the rest of the Bullpen out to pasture — far from it! Rather, we plan to combine the best of the "old" with the best of the "new" — as miraculous Marvel picks up steam-roller speed on its breakaway path to greatness! You come too. . .

ITEM! You've probably noticed the name **GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER** popping up on a tale or two of late, and wondered who (or what) he is! Well, he's an old crdny and colleague of none other than Merry **GERRY CONWAY** — and he's a talented fantasy author in his own right! If you don't believe us, just fall by your local bookstore, which should now be displaying George's first hardbound s-f novel, which has the unlikely title **What Entropy Means to Me**. (And if you think the title is way-out, wait'll you read the book itself!) Okay, G.A. — that's plug enough for one issue! Welcome aboard — but the first time you miss a deadline, we're gonna tell the whole wide world how you got the nickname "Piglet"! 'Nuff said?

ITEM! And, if the rest of you wanna know what else **STAN**, **ROY**, and the Bullpen Gang have in store for you — sneak a peek at the snappy subliminal-type messages we've sprinkled around the various mags this month! Getting there is half the fun, Flame-Keeper! Peace!

BEWARE THE CLAWS OF...
THE CAT!
COMING SOON FROM MARVEL...
WHO ELSE?

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

A Sizzling Selection of
Gargantuan Goodies
NOW ON SALE!

FANTASTIC FOUR #127: The ever-lovin' blue-eyed Thing fights alone! And — some of the most mind-staggering John Buscema artwork yet! Miss it not!

SPIDER-MAN #113: Doc Ock is back! Plus — everybody's favorite wall-crawler, trapped in the middle of the biggest Gang War this side of "The Godfather"!

INCREDIBLE HULK #156: It's Hulk vs. Hulk — to the death! But one of our green-skinned goliaths has the brain of — Bruce Banner! An instant smash!

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #1: Marvel's newest voyage into the World of the Weird! And with titles like "Dig Me No Grave!" — "House!" — and "More Than Blood!" — how can any ghostly-tales aficionado go wrong?

THE GUNHAWKS #1: Reno Smith and Kid Cassidy — black man and white man, pitted against every owlihoot gun in the wild and woolly West!

CONAN THE BARBARIAN #19: Barry Smith returns as artist of the most widely-heralded comic-mag of all! And the story ain't bad, either!

FEAR #10: In his own series at last! The macabre Man-Thing — perhaps the most monstrous "hero" ever! Script by Conway — art by Gray Morrow!

Plus, these wondrous winners —

THOR #204 (Mephisto returns!) — **AVENGERS #104** — **CAPT. AMERICA & THE FALCON #154** — **HERO FOR HIRE #3** (with the man called Mace!) — **DAREDEVIL #92** — **SUB-MARINER #54** — **IRON MAN #51** — **JUNGLE ACTION #1** (a sleeper!) — **ASTONISHING TALES #14** (Ka-Zar goes to town!) — **WARLOCK #2** — **DOC SAVAGE #1** (remember it?) — **DEFENDERS #2** (co-starring the Silver Surfer!) — **SPOOF #2** — **MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #6** (The Ghost Rider lives — or does he?) — **COMBAT KELLY #3** — and enough other assorted condiments and comix to keep you busy till next time!

Collect 'em all, hear?

THE LATEST—THE GREATEST—FROM MIGHTY MARVEL!

DOC SAVAGE!

THE GUNHAWKS!

MAN-THING!

JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY #1
'NUFF SAID!





WHAT'S IN IT FOR US?



CHARMINGLY! WHEN MAKKALET DIRECT... AND IS TAKEN, THERE TO THE POINT. WILL BE LOOTING, OF COURSE... AND HYRKANIAN WOMEN ARE FAIR TO LOOK UPON.

MEANWHILE, YOU'LL BE FED AND ARMED BY US.

WHAT WAS YOUR NAME AGAIN, CIMMERIAN?

CONAN. REMEMBER IT.



OH, I SHALL, OUTLANDER.

I TRULY SHALL.



YOU! HOW DO YOU DARE OFFEND MY EYES WITH YOUR PRESENCE, BALTHAZ?

SIRE, I--



NO MATTER, WE'VE ADDED TWO GOOD MEN TO OUR ARMY... SO SOME GOOD CAME OF YOUR FOLLY, AFTER ALL.

THEY ARE HEATHEN, SIRE-- UNBELIEVERS, BOTH!

SURELY THE TARIM WOULD NOT WANT US TO ENLIST SUCH AS THEY IN HIS BEHALF!?

GODS ARE STRANGE BEINGS, OLD COMRADE...



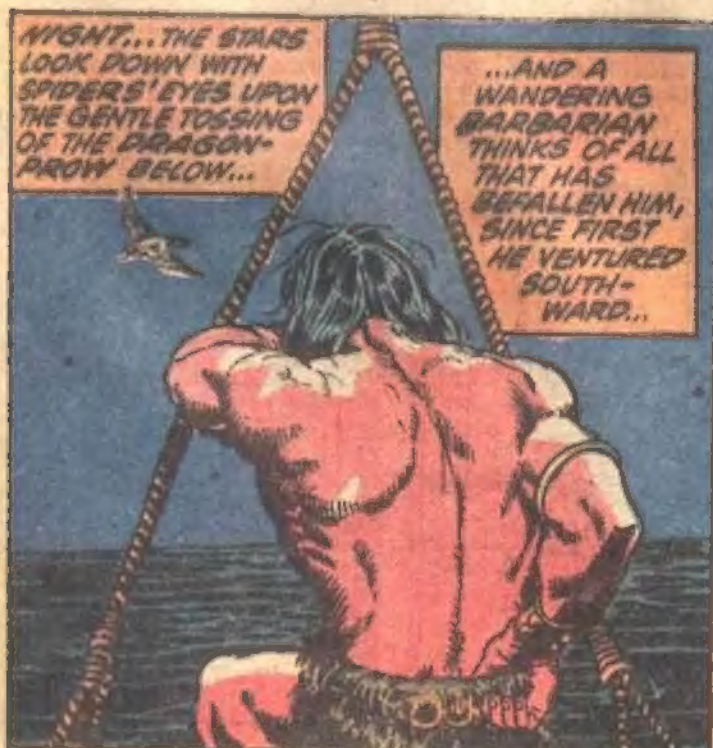
THEY HAVE THEIR FAVORITES, I SUPPOSE... AND PRAYER HAS BEEN SAID TO MOVE THEM...

BUT I'VE NOTICED THEY SEEM TO SMILE MOST ON THOSE WITH THE MIGHTIEST SWORD-ARMS, THE STRONGEST WILLS...!

THE WIND TURNS. ORDER THE SAILS LOWERED, BALTHAZ...



...WE'LL GAZE SOON ENOUGH ON THE DOOMED RAMPARTS OF MAKKALET.



NIGHT... THE STARS LOOK DOWN WITH SPIDERS' EYES UPON THE GENTLE TOSSING OF THE DRAGON-PROW BELOW...

...AND A WANDERING BARBARIAN THINKS OF ALL THAT HAS BEFALLEN HIM, SINCE FIRST HE VENTURED SOUTH-WARD...



THINGS WERE SIMPLER FAR, IN THE BROODING HILLS OF CIMMERIA... THE FIERCE FROZEN WASTES OF ASGAARD AND VANAHEIM...



THERE, A MAN MIGHT GRASP A BLOOD-STAINED BLADE! IN HIS FIST...

...AND THINK HIMSELF THE MASTER OF HIS OWN DESTINY, HIS OWN MOST-MORTAL FATE...



HERE, AMONG MEN CALLED CIVILIZED, A STRANGER MAY SMILE AND EXTEND ONE HAND...

...WHILE THE OTHER STRAINS FURTIVELY FOR THE HIDDEN DAGGER.



HERE, CONAN FINDS ALL MOTIVES MURKY... ALL ACTIONS DEVIOUS...



NO USE TRYING TO COMPREHEND THE NAMELESS FORCES WHICH PLAY A MAN LIKE A PUPPET...



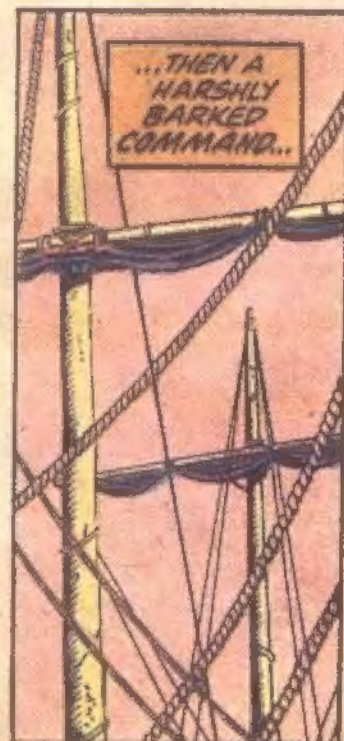
NO USE...



...AT ALL.



MORNING NOW: IT COMES WITH A STILL-HUSHED FOOT-FALL...



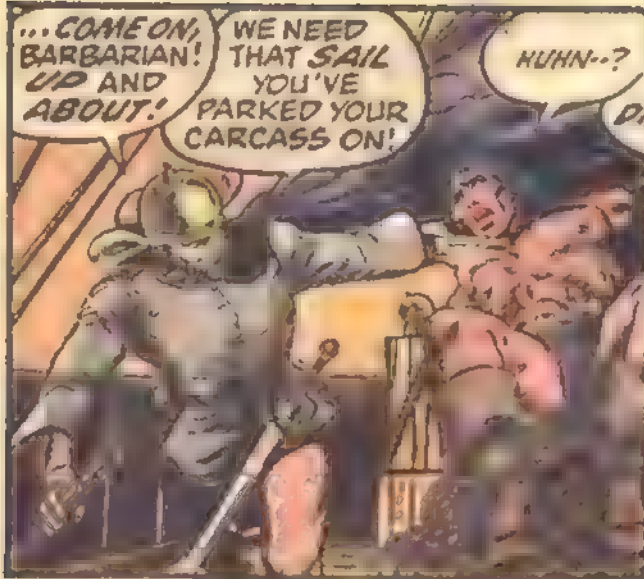
...THEN A HARSHLY BARKED COMMAND...



...TILL THE SAILS BEGIN TO UNFOLD, UNFURL...



...LIKE GREAT PURPLE HYACINTHS, STRAINING TO EMBRACE THE SUN'S FIRST RAYS.



...COME ON, BARBARIAN! UP AND ABOUT!

WE NEED THAT SAIL YOU'VE PARKED YOUR CARCASS ON!



HUHN..?

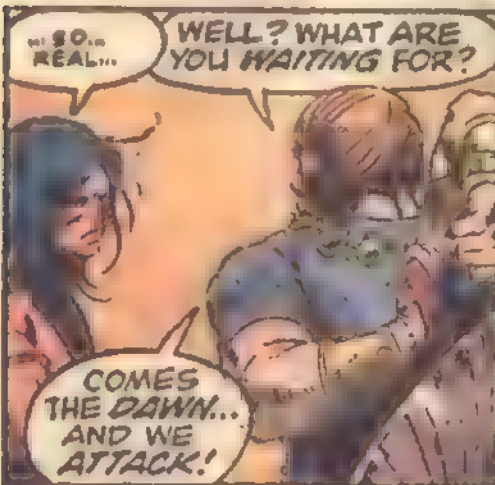
I WAS... DREAMING, THEN!?

ALL... JUST A DREAM.



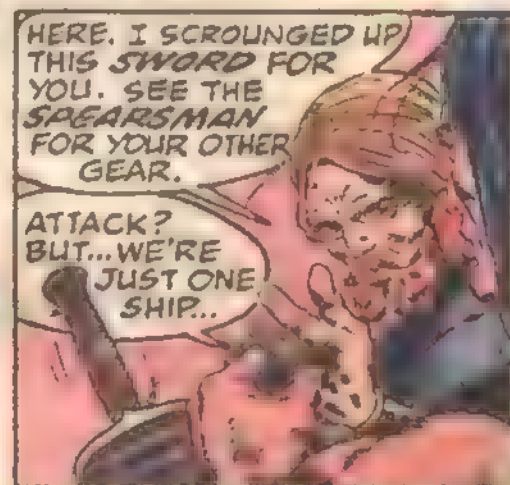
BUT...IT SEEMED... SO REAL.

RISE AND SHINE, LITTLE MAN. TIME'S A-WASTING.



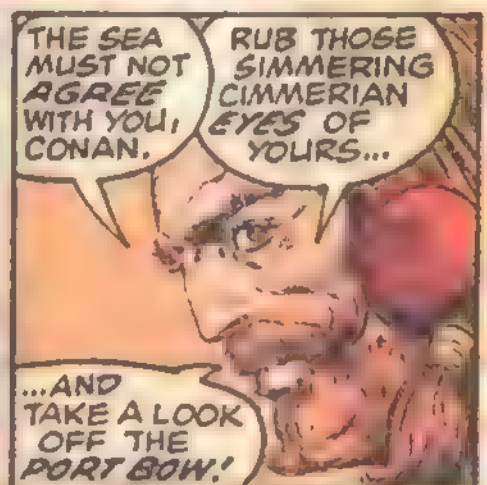
WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

COMES THE DAWN... AND WE ATTACK!



HERE, I SCROUNGED UP THIS SWORD FOR YOU. SEE THE SPEARSMAN FOR YOUR OTHER GEAR.

ATTACK? BUT...WE'RE JUST ONE SHIP...



THE SEA MUST NOT AGREE WITH YOU, CONAN.

RUB THOSE SIMMERING CIMMERIAN EYES OF YOURS...

...AND TAKE A LOOK OFF THE PORT BOW!



CROM!

THE REST OF THE TURANIAN SIEGE-FLEET! A PRETTY SIGHT, EH--

--AS LONG AS YOU'RE NOT THE ONE BEING BESIEGED!

LOOK ALIVE, YOU SEA-DOGS! MAKKALET'S NOT GOING TO ROLL OUT ANY CRIMSON CARPETS FOR YOUR UNBATHED FEET!!

AT THE SOUND OF THE LOOKOUT'S STRIDENT CRY, THE TWO BRAWNY NORTHLANDER'S TURN FORWARD-- AND, GLEAMING IN THE MISTY MORNING SUN, THEY BEHOLD--

MAKKALET! NOW THERE'S A SIGHT TO MOVE EVEN ONE WHO'S WINED AND WENCHED IN SHADYAR THE WICKED, EH, LAD?

ONE OF THE RICHEST CITIES OF THE EAST-- ALL OPEN AND WAITING LIKE A WOMAN'S ARMS!

TOO OPEN, REDBEARD. WHY DOES NO ONE MAN THE SEAWARD RAMPARTS?

I FEAR A TRAP...

CONAN'S WORDS HANG LOVELY IN THE COOL DAWN AIR...

THEN, SUDDENLY--THE HEAVENS ARE ALIVE WITH FIRE AND STEEL-TIPPED DEATH--

AND THE DRAGON-PROWS LURCH JUST AS SUDDENLY AWAY--

ONLY THE LAPPING WAVES WHISPER, AS THE FIRST SHIP PRAYS NEAR A BECKONING QUAY...

--LIKE BOLTING STALLIONS STUNG BY THE LURKING SCORPION!

THAT'LL SHAKE THE SAND FROM YOUR EYES, FOR SURE!

YOU! WHERE'S THE SPEARSMAN? I NEED ARMOR!

TRY THE MAIN MAST!

BY MITRA, IF I'M NOT SET ABLAZE BY THE TIME I GET SOME ARMOR--!

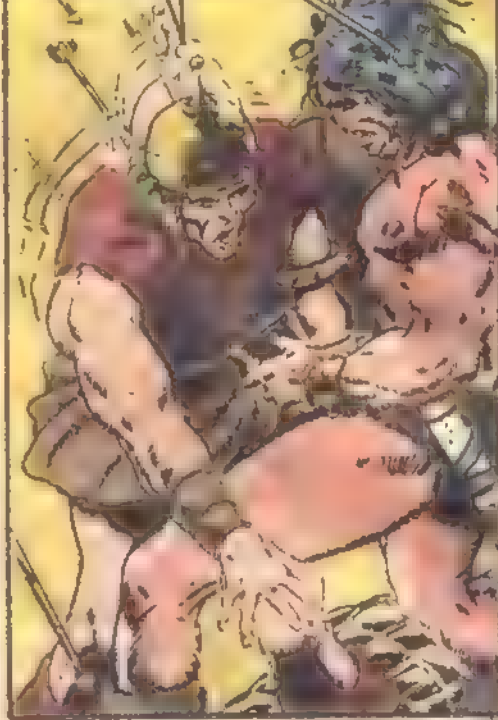
NO, SPEARSMAN! GIVE ME A SHIELD-- QUICKLY, MAN!

I'M TALKING TO YOU!

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT,
OUTLANDER! YOU'LL
HAVE TO TAKE YOUR--



--CHANCES--!



I LIKE IT NOT, KHARAM-AKKAD.
IT'S NOT GOING AS YOU
SAID IT WOULD!

WHILE,
WITHIN
THE
WAITING
CITY...

CANNOT WE JUST
GIVE THE TARIM BACK--
BEFORE IT'S TOO
LATE?

IT IS ALREADY TOO
LATE, MY KING... FOR ALL
SAVE COURAGE IN
BATTLE.

BUT YOU
SWORE THE FLAMING
ARROWS WOULD
DETER THEM...



"YET NOW, THEY'VE
DOCKED INSTEAD...
ALMOST AT THE
DOORWAY OF THE
PALACE ITSELF..."



THIS IS YOUR
DOING, KHARAM--
YOURS!

I PLACED MY
FAITH IN YOUR
WORD-- AND
DIVERTED ALL MY
FORCES TO THE
MAIN QUAY--



--LEAVING MY OWN
COURTYARD ALL
BUT DEFENSELESS!



MY MIND SPINS--
I CANNOT THINK!
MUST REST...

YES, REST,
MY HUSBAND...
TAKE ONE OF
YOUR POTIONS,
AND SLEEP.

KHARAM-
AKKAD CAN
DO WHAT MUST
BE DONE.





YES, I SUPPOSE I COULD, AT THAT. FAR BETTER THAN I, TOO!

STILL, I AM THE KING! THE PEOPLE LOOK UP TO ME--I MUST BE AN INSPIRATION TO THEM--I--

YOUR SUBJECTS LOVE YOU, MY LORD. BUT MORE THAN LOVE IS NEEDED IN THIS MORNING'S LIGHT!

YOUR CAPTAINS ARE HERE, MY KING. THEY AWAIT THEIR ORDERS.



HEAR ME, HUSBAND! WAS IT NOT KHARAM-ARKAD WHO FIRST FASHIONED THE PLAN TO ABDUCT THE TARIM?

THEM LET HIM DEVISE A WAY TO KEEP HIM!

YES-- YES, ALL RIGHT!

WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE, HIGH PRIEST?

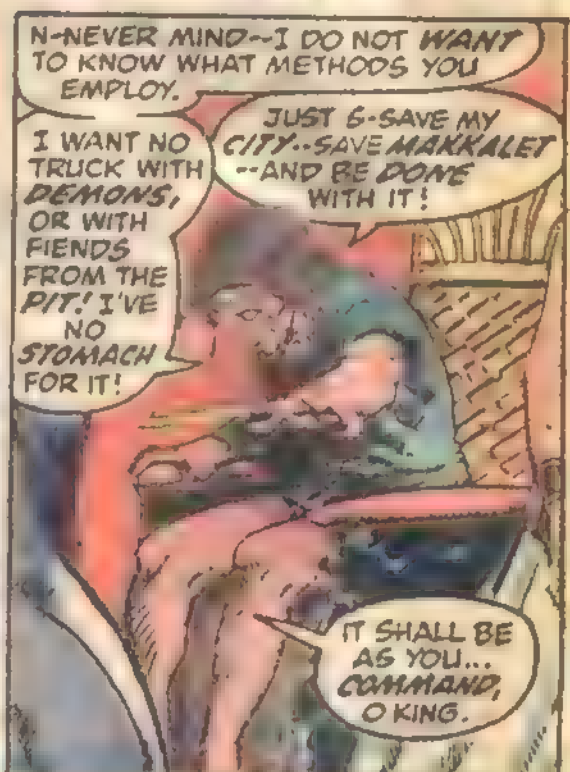


I DO NOT PROPOSE, O KING. I DISPOSE.

REST ASSURED, I SHALL SAVE MAKKALET THIS DAY...

BUT MY WAYS ARE MY OWN--AND NO OTHER MAN MAY KNOW THEM...

NOT EVEN YOU, SIRE.

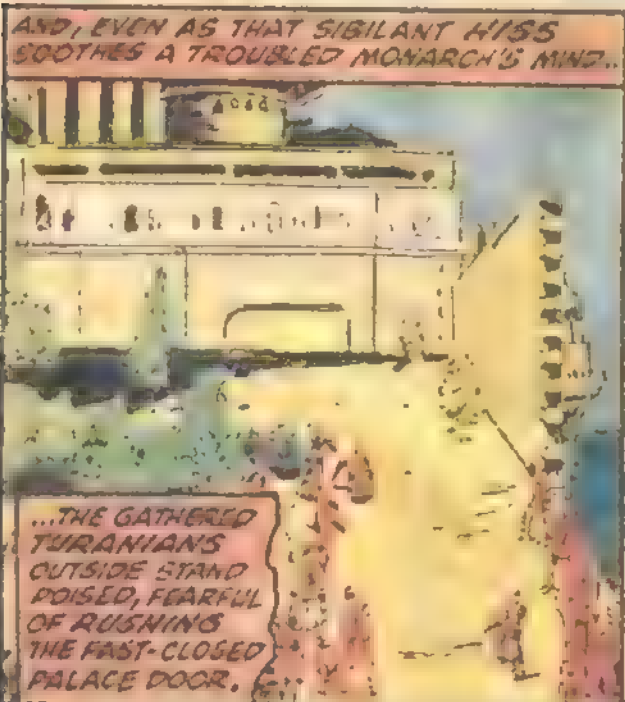


N-NEVER MIND--I DO NOT WANT TO KNOW WHAT METHODS YOU EMPLOY.

I WANT NO TRICK WITH DEMONS, OR WITH FIENDS FROM THE PIT! I'VE NO STOMACH FOR IT!

JUST SAVE MY CITY--SAVE MAKKALET--AND BE DONE WITH IT!

IT SHALL BE AS YOU... COMMAND, O KING.



AND, EVEN AS THAT SIBILANT HISS SOOTHES A TROUBLED MONARCH'S MIND...

...THE GATHERED TURANIANS OUTSIDE STAND POISED, FEARFUL OF RUSHING THE FAST-CLOSED PALACE DOOR.



THREE MEN CLIMB THE SEA-WALL, MAKE FOR THE LOWER WINDOWS OF THE PALACE.



IT IS A WAY, ONE SUPPOSES, THAT MUST BE TRIED.



STILL, ONE WHICH IS FOUND...



...WANTING.



MEANWHILE,
A GAUNT GREY
FORM STALKS
THRU MIRRORRED
HALLS...

...THOUGH NOT ALONE.

CAPTAIN--ORDER YOUR
MIGHTIEST WARRIOR
TO STAND BY THE
DOOR BELOW--

AND MAKE
YOU READY
TO FOLLOW
HIM INTO
BATTLE.

GREAT
ONE...
I...

THEY
ARE
TOO
MANY.

IT
WOULD BE
SUICIDE!

I GAVE YOU A
COMMAND, MY
DEAR CAPTAIN.
YOU WILL
OBEY
IT...

--OR THE LIZARDS
WHICH BASK IN THE
SUMMER STONES
SHALL HAVE NEW
BRETHREN, COME
EVENING!

Y-YES,
O PRIEST...

NOW GO--AND
SERVE ME WELL
IF YOU VALUE
YOUR UNMORTAL
SOUL!

YOUR GREAT-
TOWERED CITY
HAS NEED OF
YOU THIS DAY
OF DAYS--

--AS IT
HAS FAR
GREATER
NEED OF
KHARAM-
AKKAD!

IS THAT YOUR
PRECIOUS TARIM,
ON YONDER
PARAPET?

IF SO, HE
SEEMS MORE
LIKE A MORTAL
MAN TO ME!

NEITHER
MAN NOR TARIM,
BARBARIAN...

BY HIS GREY ROBES,
HE MUST BE KHARAM-
AKKAD--

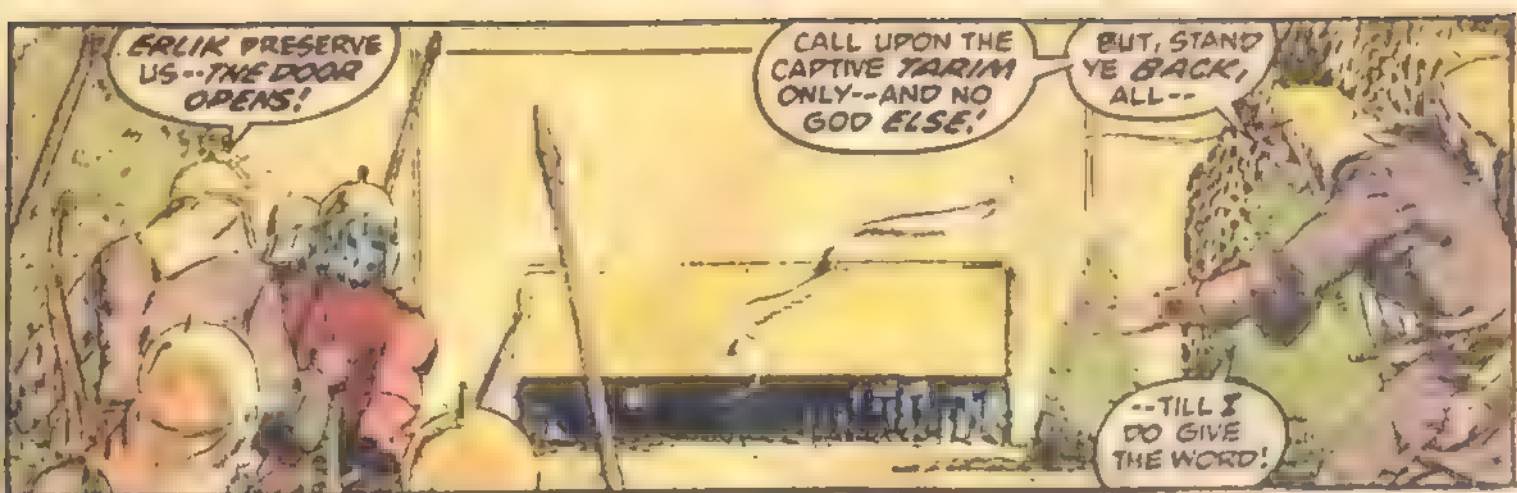
SOME CALL
HIM PRIEST--
AND OTHERS,
WIZARD!

BUT--FORGET
ABOUT HIM!

LOOK YOU--
SOMETHING
HAPPENS
UP AHEAD--!

WIZARD?

NO ONE
SAID AUGHT
OF...
WIZARDS!



ERLIK PRESERVE
US--THE DOOR
OPENS!

CALL UPON THE
CAPTIVE TARIM
ONLY--AND NO
GOD ELSE!

BUT, STAND
YE BACK,
ALL--

--TILL I
DO GIVE
THE WORD!



YET, AT ONCE, THAT
WORD DYES UPON
BALHAZ' THIN LIFE...

...AS DAWN'S BRIGHT GAZE FALLS OBSCENELY UPON A NIGHTMARE
VISION...

...OF GRINNING
SPECTERS
FRESH FROM HELL!



DO THOSE MON-
STERS HOPE TO
FIGHT THE BLESSED
OF TARIM WITH A
FEW MEN IN
GHOULISH MASKS?

CHARGE!

CHARGE,
I SAY!!

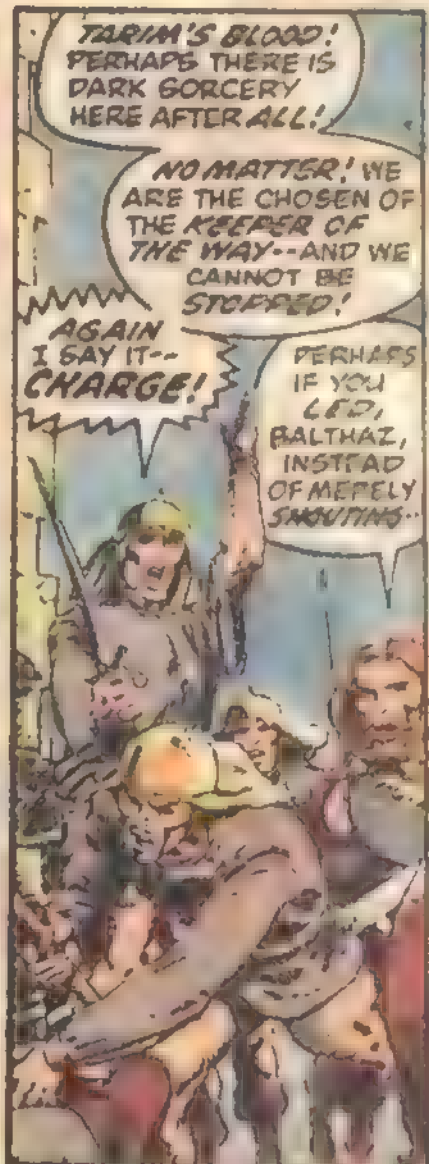


BUT THOUGH TURANIAN EARS
MAY HEAR--TURANIAN
MUSCLES WILL NOT OBEY!

FOR, ALMOST ON
THE INSTANT,
THERE IS
FLESH ON
LEERING SKULL--
SKIN ON
GLEAMING
BONE--

--AS RIME
MEN STRIDE
FORTH TO
WAR--

--AND EACH
THE VERY
MAGE OF
THE OTHERS!

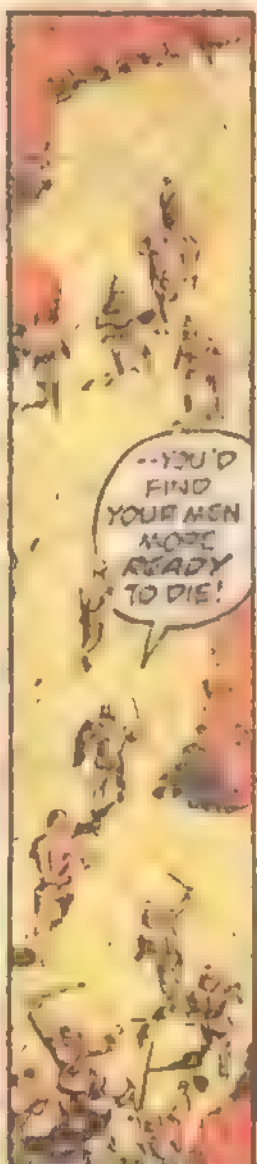


TARIM'S BLOOD!
PERHAPS THERE IS
DARK GORCERY
HERE AFTER ALL!

NO MATTER! WE
ARE THE CHOSEN OF
THE KEEPER OF
THE WAY--AND WE
CANNOT BE
STOPPED!

AGAIN
I SAY IT--
CHARGE!

PERHAPS
IF YOU
LED,
BALHAZ,
INSTEAD
OF MERELY
SHOUTING--



--YOU'D
FIND
YOUR MEN
MORE
READY
TO DIE!

FAPHR HAS SPOKEN IN ANGER...
YET MORE TRULY THAN HE KNEW!
FOR, THE NINE ARE GIANTS IN
STATURE-- FIERCE IN ASPECT--

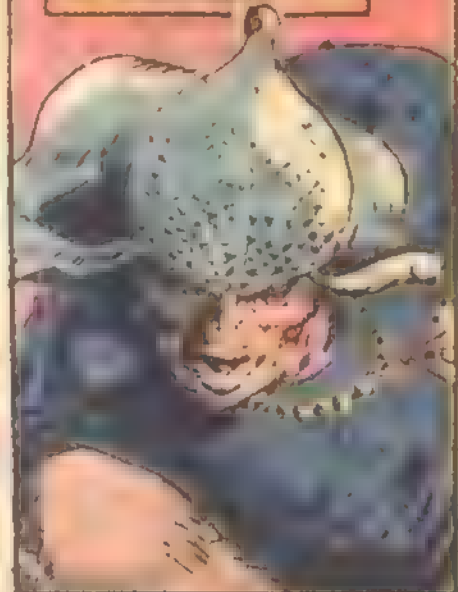


--AND STAND
UNSCATHED BY
THOSE FEW FLASHING
TURANIAN SWORDS
WHICH PIERCE THEIR
GRISLY DEFENSES!

WHILE, EACH TIME
A MIGHTY BLADE
OF ONE OF THE
NINE IS
RAISED ABOVE
BRIGHT-
HELMETED
HEAD...



...IT SENDS ANOTHER
SOUL TO THE HOUSE
OF SHADES!



THE ACCURSED
GIANTS ARE
PROTECTED BY
MAGIC! WE
ARE LOST,
VANIRMAN--
LOST!

THAT WE ARE--IF YOU
DON'T LET GO OF MY
SWORD-ARM!



I'VE
GREATER
NEED OF YOU
THAN THAT...

NOW, WHILE NOT BATTLE
RAGES, TAKE TWO MEN
AND SCALE THE SEA-
WALL AGAIN! IF YOU
COULD REACH THE
PALACE ITSELF--

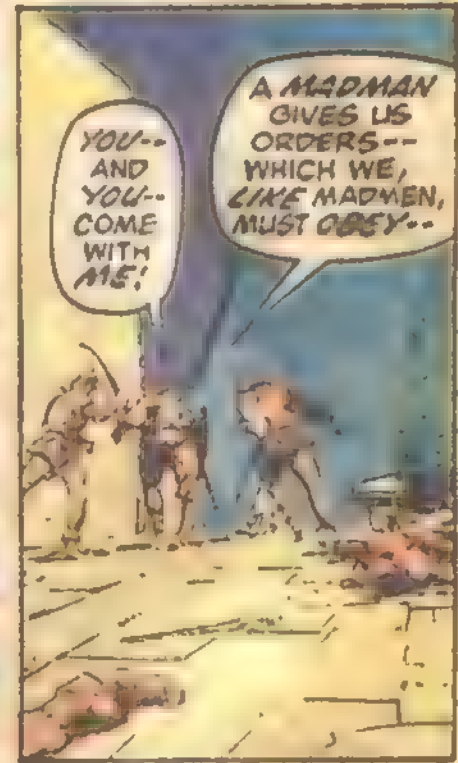
--IT
WOULD AVAIL US
NOTHING, AND IT'S
SUICIDE, AS WELL!

I AM IN
COMMAND
HERE, BARBARIAN.
NOW GO!

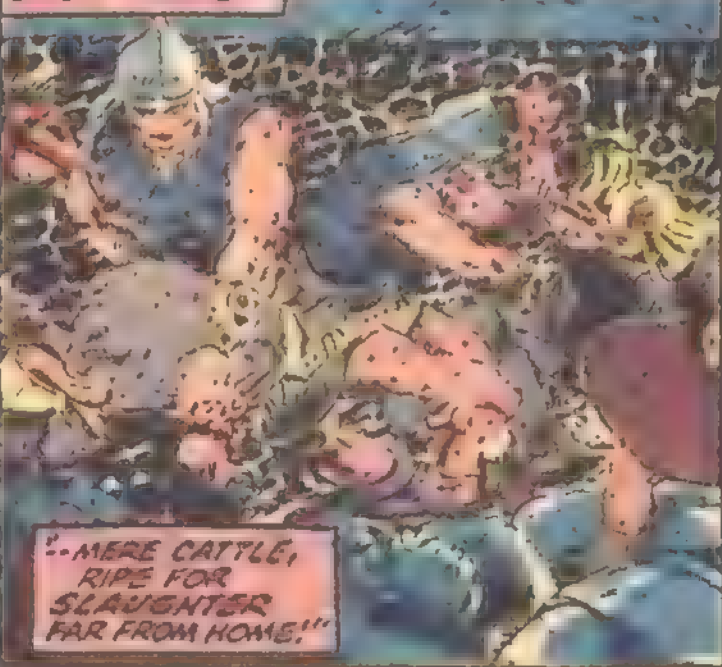


YOU--
AND
YOU--
COME
WITH
ME!

A MADMAN
GIVES US
ORDERS--
WHICH WE,
LIKE MADMEN,
MUST OBEY--



--EVEN IF WE DIE LIKE THE POOR DEVILS
BACK THERE--

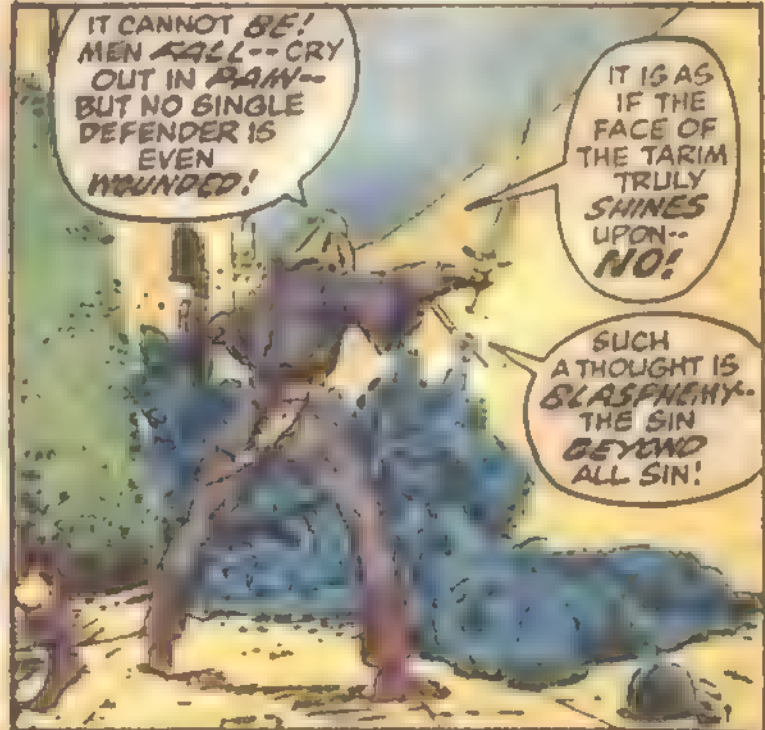


--MERE CATTLE,
RIPE FOR
SLAUGHTER
FAR FROM HOME!

IT CANNOT BE!
MEN FALL-- CRY
OUT IN PAIN--
BUT NO SINGLE
DEFENDER IS
EVEN
WOUNDED!

IT IS AS
IF THE
FACE OF
THE TARIM
TRULY
SHINES
UPON--
NO!

SUCH
A THOUGHT IS
BLASPHEMY--
THE SIN
BEYOND
ALL SIN!



THE HYBORIAN PAGE

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The Hyborian Page in CONAN THE BARBARIAN #15 announced that, for reasons of his own, artist Barry Smith planned to leave the strip after that issue. Although the very next ish contained the equally startling news that he had changed his mind and would return to the mag as fulltime artist beginning with this issue (#19), the previous bulletin had already started a virtual avalanche of comments, cogitations, and protests. Here's a random sampling — and if they make it look as if Marveldom Assembled is just a wee bit fond of the sweat and blood which our Britisher-in-residence pours into each issue of comicdom's first and foremost sword-and-sorcery comic — well, so be it! To wit:

I salute the end of an era with the passing of Barry's artwork on CONAN. This series of 15 issues is the zenith of Marvel's creations since its inception. The masterful emergence of art and story in the sixth, eleventh, twelfth, and fifteenth issues left me spaced-out for days at a time and, in fact, still evoke moods of the magical and mystical within me even now. . . . (And forgive me, Roy — but having read a couple of the original stories, I've honestly got to state that you're a considerably better writer than Robert E. Howard!)

But Barry — I don't know what to write about that boy . . . Barry's art is a mixture of sparkles, jewels, distorted reality (in the form of giant Gila monsters and spiders), stark caricature, and opiated mood (I mean so heavy I could smel, the incense). From the day Conan first ripped a nipped chest to the lingering of a lyrical scar across his cheek, he always seemed to have a realer existence than any other hero!

Alan Moniz
(Address withheld)

Nothing can be said about the art in the past issues of CONAN that the final page of issue #15 can't say better! It is Barry Smith at his finest! All that remains to be said is simply . . . thanks.

Robert Reichman, 1431 Lancaster Ave.
St. Louis Park, Minn. 55426

All good things must come to an end, I guess. I hope, however, that it won't be said one year from now that, "When Barry Smith left CONAN, it curled up and died."

How to prevent that? First of all, don't let Roy get any ideas that a vacation from CONAN would be a good ideal. Barry may be impossible to replace as it is, but should both Barry and Roy leave — well, I hear CONAN's death-rattle just thinking about it!

C. C. Wilson, Monterey, Calif.

There are very few artists who work for comic-book companies these days who could be considered what I term an "effect artist." This type of artwork grows and flourishes; it seems to change thru the issues and becomes more devastatingly beautiful with each new panel. This maturing artwork also enriches the characterization of a hero, for as the artwork goes more into depth, more of the true character and personality of the hero is shown. Such an artist is Barry Smith, who — with his impeccable perspective and technique — has truly recreated what was pictured in the deep imagination of Robert E. Howard. Barry Smith's name will be remembered by many as the greatest visual recreator

of Conan after Frank Frazetta. It was almost as if Conan himself was bidding Barry good tidings on the last page of CONAN #15, when he turned and looked at us (and Zukala) and said simply: "Farewell."

Gary Fishman, 134 Carol Drive
Rochester, N.Y. 14617

I told a friend of mine that Barry Smith might leave CONAN, and he said: "Good!" I asked him, "Why good?" And he said: "Because now I won't have to buy CONAN any more!"

Think about it.

Lawrence Shapiro, 2001 Bowers
Santa Clara, Calif. 95051

You must keep Barry working on CONAN — even if you have to bribe him!

Jeannie Lee (Address Not Given)



Okay, people — so now the Bashful One is back in earnest, after a couple of artfully-pencilled fill-in issues by Gil Kane. Only thing is, due to the truly fearsome amount of time and work which Barry poured into this, his initial return-effort on CONAN, plus a few other time-factors, inker Dan Adkins was able to finish off only the first half of this issue — and the latter portion is therefore being reproduced from Barry's pencils, so that Dan can get a head jump on the next tale. Hope you get a kick out of seeing just how those finished pencil-drawings of Barry's look in the flesh. Let us know, huh?

Also, this issue marks something radically new in the CONAN comic for both Barry and Roy. Beginning this go-round, they've begun a several-issue epic which they hope will eventually match the scope of Robert E. Howard's own "The Hour of the Dragon" (published in paperback as *Conan the Conqueror*), the one and only novel which REH ever wrote — and which was, itself, serialized in five parts in *Weird Tales* magazine in the late 1930's. No, there'll be no real cliff-hanger endings — just a strong plot-thread running thru the next several issues as Turanian hordes face the defenders of Makkalet — with the stalwart Cimmerian towering over all!

But, when it's all said and done, the lads are hoping you'll say that this, perhaps, was Conan's finest hour! 'Nuff said?

KNOW YE THESE, THE HALLOWED RANKS OF MARVELDOM:

R.F.O. (Real Frantic One) — A buyer of at least 3 Marvel mags a month.
T.T.B. (Titanic True Believer) — A divinely-inspired 'No-Prize' winner.
Q.N.S. (Quite 'Nuff Sayer) — A fortunate frantic one who's had a letter printed.

K.O.F. (Keeper Of the Flame) — One who recruits a newcomer to Marvel's rollickin' ranks.
P.M.M. (Permanent Marvelite Maximus) — Anyone possessing all four of the other titles.
F.F.F. (Fearless Front-Facer) — An honorary title bestowed for devotion to Marvel above and beyond the call of duty.

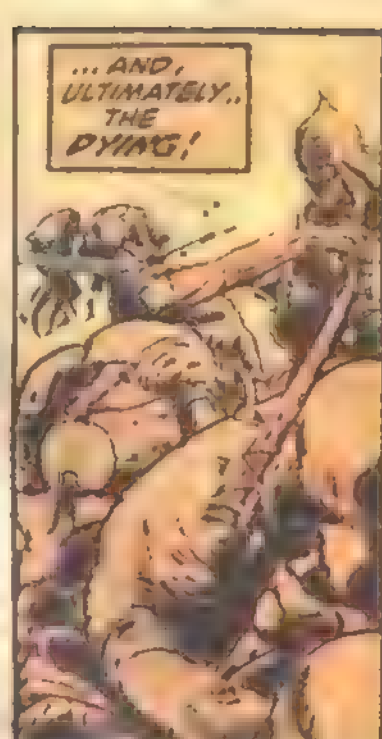


YET, FOR THOSE WHOM BALTHAZ DINES BEFORE HIM IN THE COURTYARD...

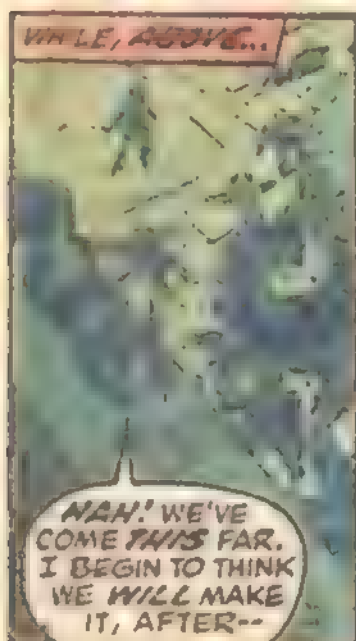


...THERE CAN BE NO SUBTLE, ADTRUSE MUSINGS ON SIN AND PIETY.

FOR THEM, THERE IS ONLY THE SHOUTED WARNING-- THE SLASHING BLADE--



... AND, ULTIMATELY.. THE DYING!



WHILE, ABOVE...

NAH! WE'VE COME THIS FAR. I BEGIN TO THINK WE WILL MAKE IT, AFTER--

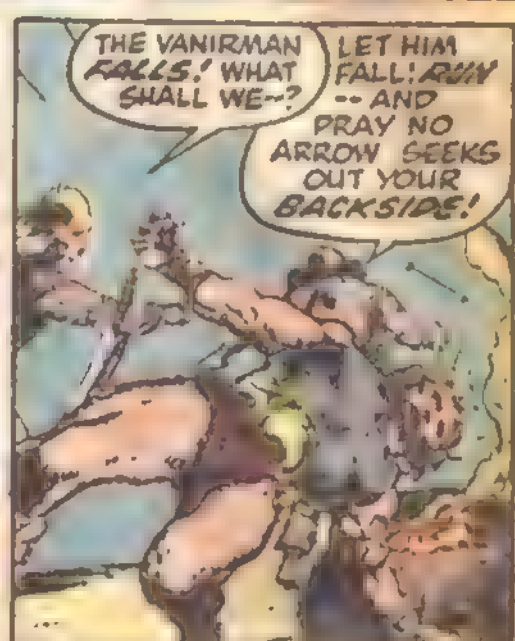


THE ARROWS!

AGAIN, THE ACCURSED--



--ARROWS!

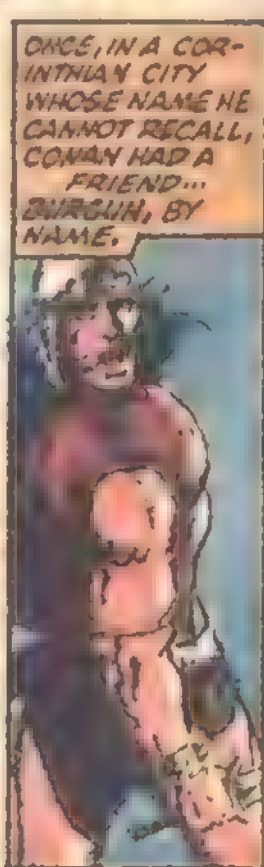


THE VANIRMAN FALLS! WHAT SHALL WE--?

LET HIM FALL! RUN -- AND PRAY NO ARROW SEEKS OUT YOUR BACKSIDE!



FAFNIR!!



ONCE, IN A CORINTHIAN CITY WHOSE NAME HE CANNOT RECALL, CONAN HAD A FRIEND... BURGUN, BY NAME.



THE GUARDSMEN TOOK HIS FRIEND, AND HANGED HIM IN THE MARKET-PLACE... AND CONAN STOOD BY HELPLESS, AND COULD DO... NOTHING.



HE HAS VOWED HE'LL NOT BE HELPLESS AGAIN.

NO, REDBEARD!
IF THEY'VE--

A-ARROWS,
CONAN! THEY...
FELLED ME WITH...
AN ARROW!

CURSED
THINGS...TO
LET MEN
PLAY AT
WAR...FROM
FAR
AWAY...!

BY CROM--
HE LIVES!

THEN, EVEN AS CONAN
KNEELS TO DRAW
FORTH THE BLAZING
SHAFT FROM THE
GAPING WOUND...

...HE GAZES FOR A MOMENT AT THE
RAGING BATTLE BELOW...

NINE GIANTS, DRIVING
BEFORE THEM THE DAIED
VANGUARD OF AN EMPIRE'S
ARMY...

AND HE STARES, DEMUSED IN
SPITE OF HIMSELF BY THE
SPECTACLE...SO DIFFERENT
WHEN VIEWED FROM ABOVE...

...SO VERY
DIFFERENT,
INDEED!

STRANGELY
SILENT NOW,
THE CIMMERIAN
RISES...

...GLARES DARKLY AT
THE GAUNT ROBED
FIGURE ACROSS THE
WAY...

...AT
THE ONE
THEY
CALL
KHARAM-
ANNAR.

ONCE AGAIN, CONAN
STOOPS...THIS TIME,
TO PICK A BOW
AND SINGLE ARROW
FROM THE COLD AND
BLOOD-STAINED
RAMPART...

UNSPEAKING STILL,
HE FITS ARROW TO
BOW...

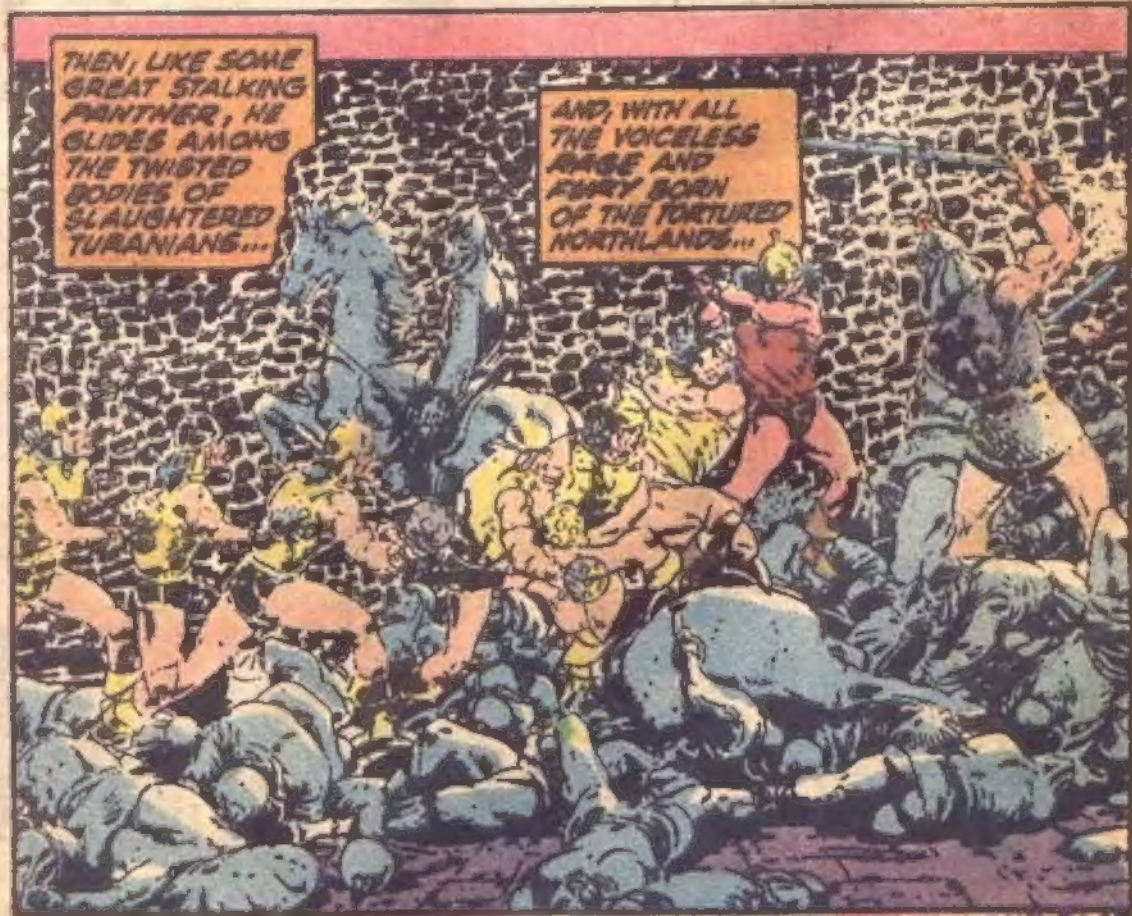
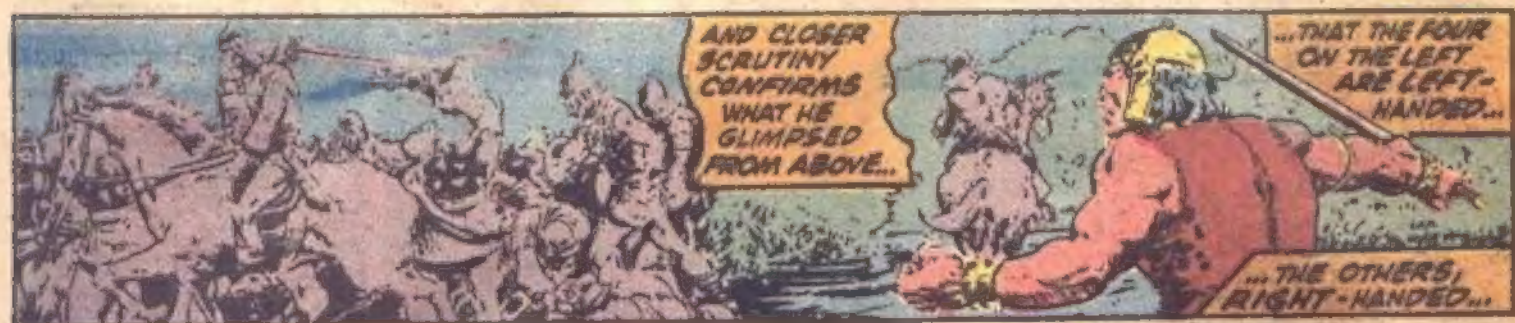
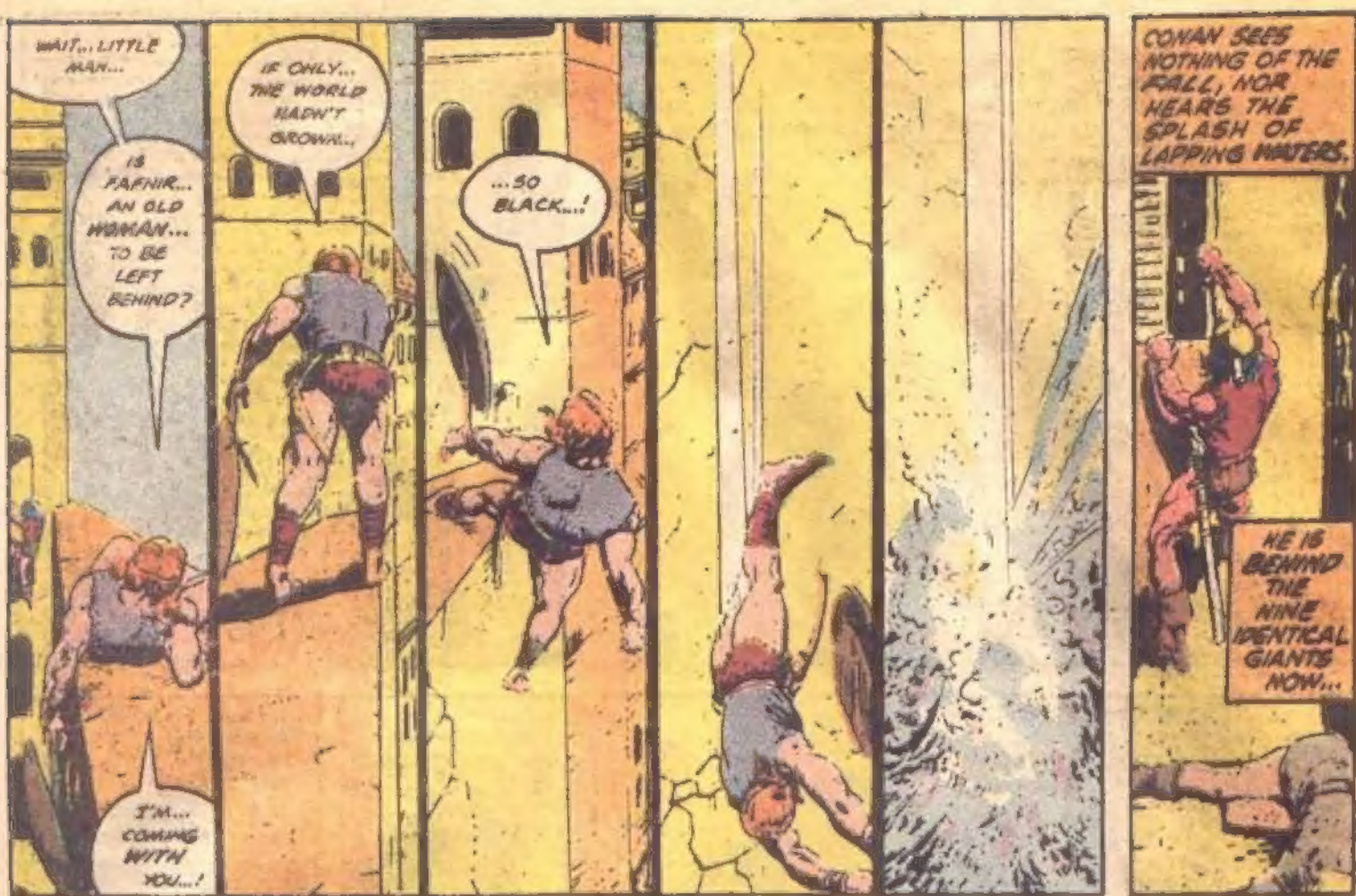
IS IT UNFAMILI-
ARITY WITH THE
WEAPON, ONLY
THAT STAYS HIS
HAND THE NEXT
MOMENT...

OR IS IT THE THOUGHT
OF GREAT FAFNIR,
HE STRUCK DOWN...
FROM AER?

WHATEVER HIS
REASON...AND HE
CANNOT FULLY
KNOW IT...

HE FLINGS
BOTH SHAFT
AND BOW
FROM
HIM WITH
DISTASTE...

...AND HOPES
THAT THERE
ARE... OTHER
WAYS.



--HE
STRIKES!



AND, AS THE CENTERMOST
OF THE NINE TOMPLES, LIKE
SOME GREAT OAK FELLED
BY A LOWLY WOODSMAN'S
AXE...



...THE FOUR ON EITHER
SIDE OF HIM SUDDENLY
VANISHED, LEAVING NO
TRACE OF THEIR
EXISTENCE...

...SAVE FOR THE SCORES
OF TURANIAN CORPSES,
SLAIN BY SWORDS WHICH
NEVER WERE THERE!



NOW, THE TABLES ARE
TURNED ON THE
HORSEMEN WHO HAD
SPURRED ON THE
GIANT WARRIOR.
THEY'VE NO RECOURSE
BUT REGAIN THE
PALACE
GATES...



...AND PRAY
TO THEIR
CAPTURED
TARIM THAT
EASTERN
WALLS
ARE
PROOF...



...AGAINST
THE VENGEFUL
SWORDS COME
OUT OF
AGHRAPUR!



WELL DONE! THE HORSE-
MEN HAD WORKED
ESPECIALLY HARD TO
GUARD THAT ONE-- I
SEE THAT NOW!

I THINK
PERHAPS
IT WAS...
THIS.

BUT, WHAT CAUSED THOSE
PHANTASMS, NOW MELTED
LIKE THE MORNING
MIST?





THAT AMULET-- WHICH GLEAMS LIKE A HIGHLY-POLISHED MIRROR? WHY THINK YOU THAT?

I'VE SEEN SUCH SORCERY BEFORE, BALTHAZ, AND--



AND, BY CROM-- I'VE JUST SEEN IT AGAIN

THE AMULET TOO-- IS-- GONE!



BUT, JUST BEFORE IT VANISHED, I SAW-- REFLECTED IN ITS FACETS--



--THE HATE-FILLED VISAGE OF THE ONE YOU CALL-- KNARAM-AKKAD!



ABOVE, HOWEVER, THERE IS NO WORD... NO USELESS CRY OF OUT-RAGE FROM THE FOILED PRIEST-WIZARD.

HE MERELY TURNS...AND LEAVES THE PARAPET.



BY TARIM, MAN--IF SORCERERS COULD SLAY WITH LOOKS ALONE, YOU'D NEVER SEE FABLED CYMMERIA AGAIN!

HERE'S A FRESH SWORD. YOU'LL NEED IT...IF EVER YOU FACE KNARAM-AKKAD ALONE!

FACE THAT DEVIL? NOT FOR ALL THE GOLD IN AGHRAPUR AND MAKKALET!



I'LL LEAVE SUCH DEEDS FOR THOSE WHO'D SEEK TO RESCUE A CAPTIVE GOD!



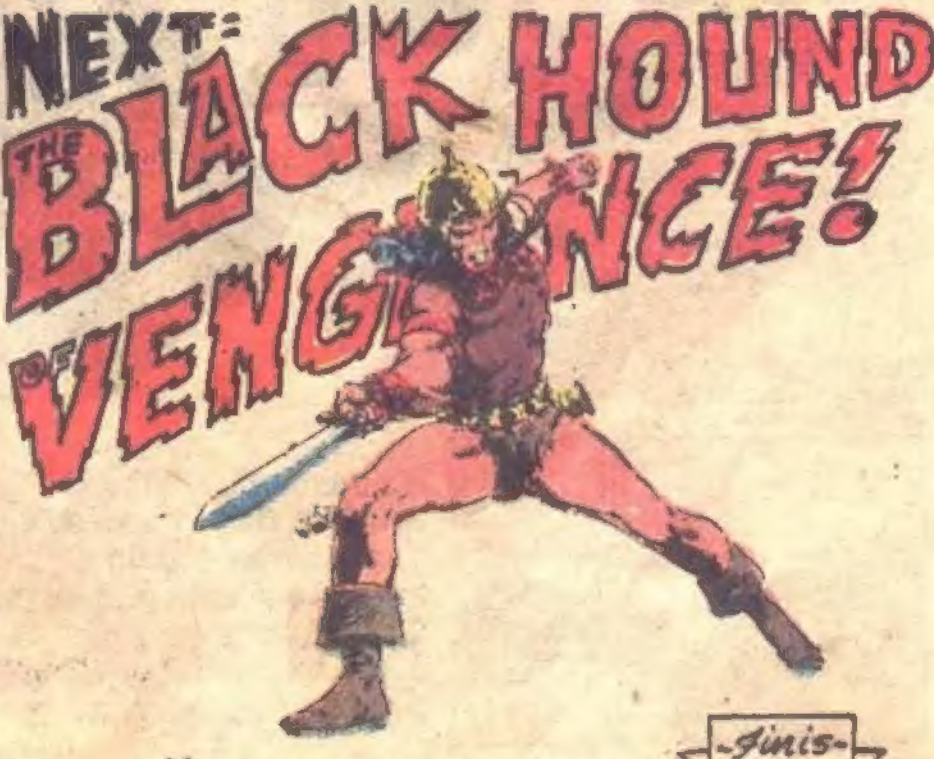
BAIT ME NOT, BARBARIAN. WE'VE FOUGHT ENOUGH... AND NOW MUST JOIN YEZDIGERD, AND HELP HIM PLAN TO BRING THE CITY TO ITS KNEES.

WE'LL PLOT A SIEGE, OVER FLAGONS OF WINE...

AND RANIR AND I WILL SEE TO IT THAT THE WINE FLOWS AS FREELY...



...AS DID TURANIAN BLOOD TODAY, ON THE SUN-SPLASHED STONES OF MAKKALET!



NEXT:
**THE BLACK HOUND
OF VENGEANCE!**

-Finis-